

[The Doughty Family at Home]

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SOUTH CAROLINA WRITERS' PROJECT LIFE HISTORY.

TITLE: THE DOUGHTY FAMILY AT HOME.

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Name of Person Interviewed Mrs. LeGer Mitchell (white) (nee - Annie Gilchrist)

Fictitious Name Mrs. Ladson Smith

Street Address Apartment 164 Broad Street

Place Charleston, S. C.

Occupation Lady of leisure.

Name of Writer Martha S. Pinckney

Name of Reviser State Office

NOTE: "Doughty family" substituted for "Gilchrist family".

Project #-1655

Martha S. Pinckney

March 31, 1939

Charleston, S. C. LIFE HISTORY. THE DOUGHTY FAMILY AT HOME.

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Mrs. Ladson Smith is small, slender and dainty. She is the youngest member of her family, a widow, and the last of her line. She now lives in a modern apartment on Broad Street, the dividing line between "Down Town" and "Up Town"

This is her story:

"You know our old home at the corner of Bee Street and Ashley Avenue, a big brick house of three stories set in the midst of a large garden. Each floor contains four large rooms and dressing rooms. The entrance is from the garden through the piazza into a reception hall. On the left is the drawing room behind which is the library, better known as Papa's study, and on the right, the dining room and pantries. The kitchen was on the outside, as in all southern homes built before the present century. The rooms are of fine proportion and beautifully finished by first class artisans. Each member of the family had a separate bedroom. Of course, there was a Guest room, a Prophet's Chamber, as it were, always ready for the expected guest.

"A hundred years ago when the city was dependent upon cisterns and deep wells for its water supply, the home had a huge cistern and tank which was carefully guarded.

"The house was handsomely furnished, but not in one period. There were beautiful pieces inherited from both sides of the family; 2 art treasures collected in travel and portraits. (Papa did not believe in family portraits in the drawing room.) They were placed in the dining room or in the library. There were miniatures by celebrated artists - some blue-eyed golden haired ladies, painted by Pierre Henri or Vallee', in the eighteenth century. Others were of haughty plain persons, painted abroad and a few by our own Charles Fraser, well known for the perfection of his art. The miniatures were carefully wrapped in flannel and put away in trunk or chest. Most of them have been given to the Gibbes Art Gallery.

"There is no use to mention silver. We like other southern families owned silver that was brought over from England.

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"My father was a lawyer by profession. He had a masterful mind and had made money; but also lost it, for he was an idealist and a visionary. He spent thousands on schememems which were not practicable at the time, or for some reason or other, fell off of the tree before they matured. He lived before his time. The scheme which cost him one hundred thousand dollars is only remembered by the row of piles extended from the mainland across creeks and marsh to Sullivan's Island. The idea was perfect; to connect the large barrier islands with the mainland. This has since been accomplished by the building of a double driveway and draw-bridge from Mount Pleasant to Sullivan's Island and to the Isle of Palms, over almost the exact route where his piles are still visible.

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"Papa was a dictator in his own home. His decrees were never questioned there was no appeal from his judgments, for when any of us applied to Mama her answer would be, 'What did your father say'. or 'ask your father'.

"Papa was a strict Presbyterian; but joined the Episcopal Church and all of us attended services regularly. He believed in education for his children - in fact, it was always accepted as a necessity - and we were expected to do our part which he said was to make the most of our opportunities. Papa was a strict but loving parent. Mama was quite willing for him to assume the management. They were never known to have an argument. She liked to do the housekeeping in the old time way, with Negro servants whom she had trained into her ways. She enjoyed walking quietly among her flowers. The gorgeous geraniums on the lower piazza, and the colorful borders of the garden were her especial care.

"There were four of us. Emma the eldest, as you know, was an artist, devoted to her music, drawing and painting. The last was her specialty. With talent and temperament and such a strong nature, it seems hard to believe how she could have so entirely resigned her will to her fathers wishes. He was her idol and his word her law.

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"Augusta was named after Mama and looked more like her. She was talkative and clever, but with no particular talent for fine arts. Her forte was housekeeping.

"My brother Robert was next in age and the last of his name. Frail, slim and critical, he was pampered by all the family. Emma said, 'The only thing Robbie has to do when he comes in the house, is to open his mouth'.

"Then came little me, spoiled - yes, I could even get around Papa. I was once accused of kissing a boy through the fence. I must have been very small. I do not admit I was guilty. Nevertheless, Papa told me if I ever went near the fence he would put soap in my mouth. I had a devoted attendant in my nurse Mom Hannah, who escorted me to school until I was nine years old. She had been a nurse for four generations. She had been given to my mother's grandmother, Barbara Jenkins, by her father. Mom Hannah was always faithful and devoted to the family, and we gave her [?] care and consideration. She died when I was nine years old.

"Robbie and I must have caused Emma much annoyance at times; but she never showed it. We went into the drawing room when the boys came to see her, and listened to everything, often giggling and sometimes mimicking what we saw. On an occasion when a young man was coming to see her, we knew he was 'going to propose', so Robbie suggested that I go under the sofa and hear what he was going to say. It was this very sofa (touching the sofa on which 5 she sat). He came in the door just opposite, and sat on the sofa above me, still for a while, then he leaned down and caught me, and pulled me out - oh, I was mad! He took me right to Papa, and I was punished, but Robbie got off scot free. Emma was very angry with the young man - said that she could have managed it. Emma was in her teens, I don't think he had anything to propose. Later, Emma said, 'Yes, I could have made a very good match if it hadn't been for Robbie and Annie.'

"The Porter Military Academy was just across the Avenue and the boys liked to visit at the Doughty home. They knew the rules and conformed to them. There was Charlie Dean,

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handsome and debonair; Larry Holmes, called 'The Constant Idiot', and others. Emma was very popular with them. She would laugh and jolly them along, but did not care for love making. 'Necking' had not come in but would never have appealed, with her training.

"Valentine's day was carefully observed. One of the earliest valentine from Larry Holmes started thus: 'Sweet Emma, my dear.' On this occasion he had asked a friend to address the envelope. 'Well', said his friend, 'What in her name?' 'Oh,' exclaimed Larry, 'that would be telling', and he joined in the howl of laughter at his expense. Charlie's valentines were quite different - the pressure of his hand as he clasped her's in the dance; a look deep into her eyes; happy times spent at the piano, when Emma played 6 his accompaniments. He sang the songs that all of us loved, in his rich tenor voice.

"Album days came. Larry's contribution was: 'A perfect woman, nobly planed; To warm, to comfort and command, And still a spirit warm and bright, With something of an angel's light.'

'I can't remember Charlie's tribute to Album days. I think it was: 'To live and die for thee'. Album days came and went, and so they grew up - but Papa didn't realize that they were growing up.'

"At sixteen, Emma was a delight to behold. Of medium size, alert and agile in body and mind, her deep blue eyes, naturally grave, could sparkle with merriment if humor struck her keen sense, or melt to tenderness behind their long lashes if touched by sympathy. For ready laugh was never critical in its tone but happy and carefree. With her changing moods and expression, yet always reliable and steadfast, when you came down to it, she was a number one favorite; so individual that no one wanted to call her by any name save her own.

"Emma was attending the best school in Charleston for young ladies and by this time had finished with music and drawing teachers, and though brimming over with mischief, her school duties were completed 7 with unique precision. In appearance, if one knew the

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family, she was a feminine replica of her father. The fine head, with deep set eyes of dark blue, the white complexion and brown wavy hair - thus far she was like him. Her hands were particularly noticeable; broad, with an obvious curve on the outside; the fingers long and supple, bending back; the hands of an artist.

"In music she excelled. The piano was her instrument. A grand piano, stood in the drawing room at home. No one knew when she had first started to sketch from nature. After her school days she studied under famous artists and these sketches developed into oil paintings.

"We were never allowed to go out at night without chaperonage. If we were to be out at dark Papa had to know all about it before-hand. Emma could relax completely in the enjoyment of life. On one particular afternoon she went to a band concert on the Battery, with a girl friend. She was very happy. She didn't know why, but now and then remembered that Charlie had said he would join her there after business hours. When he did come she saw him far off. He had seen her, and lifted his hat in his debonair style. A friend was with him and they joined the two girls. After a while, Charlie suggested that they go a little further from the music, so out under the trees he told her how a man loves a girl whom he has loved from boyhood, and for once Emma didn't know the sun had set on that darkness had come on. She was much startled when she found it out for she realized that for the first time she had broken her father's rule. It was night when they got to the gateway at home and Charlie came in.

"The center walk into the garden was through a grove of orange trees, east and west of the path. Roses were everywhere in profusion. A Lady Bankshire reached to the second piazza, and white star jessamine vied with it on the other side. To the west, far back, a huge magnolia heralded the month of May with incense from its golden hearted blossoms. A tall fountain divided the path halfway to the house, sending tinkling streams of water into two basins, disturbing the red and gold fish in the depths of the lower and larger basin, and

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sprinkling the flowers of the deep border around the fountain. This is where Emma and Charlie parted.

“Papa was in his study and had come out twice to ask 'Where's Emma?' Emma came in alone. She thought it best for her to handle the situation herself. She started, 'Papa, there was music in the Battery'- He looked at her very steadily, and, frowning deeply, walked off to his study telling her to follow. She was there for a long time. After the interview she paused just long enough to ask Mama to excuse her and went up to her room. The next morning's mail brought a letter from Charlie. She took it up to her room. After a while she went out sketching and came back in time for dinner. That afternoon Charlie came. I never saw him look handsomer, as he 9 walked rapidly from the gate, where he removed his hat, and we saw that wave of fair hair above his brow. Several of us were on the piazza. He came up with some bright banter, and a word for each. Charlie was one of us, and he was at home. Emma and he went into the drawing room. They came out in short time, and he was saying something softly about 'tonight'.

“His visit that night was his last for Papa told him if he was aspiring to his daughter's hand he could never come to the house again, and that he would not even consider him as a suitor. Charlie would not take a refusal, so Papa ordered him out of the house. Charlie was only getting a small salary, and he had a mother, a brother, and two sisters. One sister did marry, and the other was a school teacher.

“Papa did not want Emma to marry, he said she was not practical, but artistic, and would be happier devoting herself to her art. That was true, Emma was not practical. Yes - it may have been selfish, he wanted her in the home, and she was needed. Everyone called on her, and she was entirely unselfish.

“Finally, broken and spent, Emma resigned everything to her fathers wishes, saying that he must know best. Charlie left the state and he died before Papa.

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"Years after, Emma formed 'The Sketch Club' for the encouragement and development of local art. At first the meetings were at 10 private residences, later their headquarters were established at the Gibbes Art Gallery. The best artists were engaged each year as instructors. The finest pictures were sent to exhibits North, South and West. Emma won blue and red ribbons, and many other awards.

These pictures on my wall are hers - 'Five Tall Palms' showing sand dunes, with an ocean background, reproduced by special permission, in a recent educational publication, ancient oaks and lily ponds on the plantations, historical buildings, curious picturesque lanes of the city, old wharves along Rebellion Roads; racing yachts, and boats with folded sails. This picture of Philadelphia lane she painted to order several times. You will notice the portraits of old Negroes. They loved to see her come alone down the lanes with camp stool and easel 'to make pictures' and always make her curtsies. All these paintings won awards. There are many others.

"When Wm. King came to see Papa as a suitor for the hand of Augusta, he met with the same reception and flat refusal which Charlie Dean had received. William had been attentive to Augusta for some time, and he was certainly never discouraged; but when he came as a suitor he was charged with presumption. Papa didn't seem to consider any man good enough for his daughters. William King was smart and capable; his financial condition was sound and he evidently left nothing unsaid which might induce Papa to look favorably on his suit. Nothing that he said availed, except to anger Papa. William was ignominiously turned down, and ordered out of the house, with the 11 inevitable mandate never to return. However, Augusta had no idea of following Emma's course, but she kept quiet on the subject, so this story ended differently.

"William King did not return to the house. He and Augusta had satisfactory meetings elsewhere, and secretly made their plans. Mr. King conferred with four of his friends, steady young business men, who joyously assisted the lovers, accompanied them to the church, witnessed the marriage and saw them safely off on their honeymoon trip. They

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then called upon Papa to notify him of his daughter's marriage. After a short and formal interview, Papa announced that matter to the family, and instructed them to look through and beyond each and all of the four guardians of the runaway match as long as life should last. He also added that Augusta had committed an unforgivable sin and was no longer to be recognized by the family.

“Augusta was never forgiven by her father nor, consequently, by her mother, though her husband continued to succeed and become a wealthy man. After father's death during a business depression, the fortunes of the family failed. The property at the corner of Bee Street and Ashley Avenue had to be sold. It was purchased by one of the four witnesses, to Augusta's wedding from whom was bought by William King. Neither he nor his wife wanted to live there. He converted it into a hospital for a time, then decided to present it to the [Diocese?] of South Carolina as a home for homeless ladies of the Episcopal Church, which it is today, and so the bronze tablet on the front of the house states.”